

Coutts Border Protest / Blockade - Media Plan - 2022-02-10

- Updates that are operational in nature, can be provided by the On-site Media Relations Officer.
- Anything that is speaking to a change in position or tactics must be approved by the Gold Command via Bronze Comms Commander (Nina).
- Questions / updates that are outside of the direct operational response should be discussed with the Bronze Comms Commander (Nina).

Onsite Media Relations

Key Messaging

- The Alberta RCMP continue to act to preserve the peace, maintain public safety and ensure the flow of traffic at the Coutts border crossing.
- This is a dynamic situation that we are managing. For this reason, and to maintain operational integrity, we are unable to answer all questions however can assure you that we continue our efforts to maintain public safety and to respond to this unlawful event.
- In all situations like this, we always start with open lines of communication. We utilize our Community Conflict Management Group (CCMG) – a group of Alberta RCMP Officers specially trained as mediators who help to peacefully resolve disputes between different groups.
- Anytime there is a reasonable chance of achieving a resolution through dialogue, that is preferable to enforcement.
- We are aware there are blockades / protests around the Province and we are monitoring those situations and deploying resources as needed to ensure public safety.
- We understand the frustration this blockade is causing – I can assure you that we are continuing to work to resolve.

Questions and Answers:

Q & As specific to Wednesdays CP10 event

On Wednesday you said this blockade has to go. Why didn't you clear it?

We started with information earlier on Wednesday. We have moved to ticketing people. Further enforcement will follow.

What happened at CP 10?

RCMP Officers wrote tickets for a variety of Traffic Safety Act offenses. People were given their tickets on site.

What charges were laid?

None that we are aware of.

What was the point of Wednesday's activity?

Ticketing is the next step in enforcement because it is the first tangible consequence for people participating in an illegal activity. Other enforcement will follow.

Why is enforcement being carried out at this particular protest site and not the major blockade at the border?

This particular site is the intersection of two public highways. Because of the protest, it has had a large amount of pedestrian traffic on the roadway at all hours, which has posed increased risks to public safety.

We are very lucky that no one has been injured to this point.

We are offering individuals a safe, lawful area to protest and we urge anyone who wants to continue this demonstration to move there immediately.

We hear a person was taken into custody. What were they charged with?

The person was displaying erratic behaviour and was taken into custody and later released with no charges.

- If pressed – We can confirm that this person was pepper sprayed because they would not get out from under a vehicle

How is this person now?

This person has been released without charges. No charges will be laid.

What are your next steps?

We are continuing to engage with the protestors to change their activities from unlawful to lawful actions. Enforcement activities will continue until that is accomplished.

We cannot give exact details of our next steps for operational security and safety reasons.

How long will this take?

We have no exact time frame for these activities.

Why did enforcement not start earlier?

We have been in ongoing communication with protestors. They have been given every opportunity to leave. Discussions with this group of protestors failed.

Arrest and ticketing is the next step in convincing these people to leave the area.

Protesters remaining in the area have been made aware of the safety risks and the possible legal repercussions.

How many vehicles are at the CP10 site?

That number varies.

General Questions

Why was this event treated differently than indigenous protests?

- Every illegal protest situation is different. What remains the same is our approach – open communication and peaceful resolution. That is always preferable to enforcement action. The dynamics, safety risks and court proceedings determine how we have to move forward.

If pressed:

- In all situations like this, we always start with open lines of communication. We have utilized our Community Conflict Management Group (CCMG) in the past— a group of Alberta RCMP officers specially trained as mediators who help to peacefully resolve disputes between different groups.
- Every situation will be different and the dynamics can change quickly.

- Anytime that there is a reasonable chance of achieving a resolution through dialogue, that is preferable to enforcement.

What makes this different from protests Indigenous people have held?

- I can't speak to the specifics of what has happened in other provinces. I wasn't involved in those events.
- If pressed about Alberta Indigenous protests – You would have to speak to Alberta RCMP HQ.

Why have there been so few arrests?

- Because our priorities are the safety of everyone involved and to keep the border open and to maintain safe passage for citizens in the affected area. To do that we need to keep the peace so we have started with open communications.
- Initially there were 250 trucks on site, we are now down to 50 trucks.
- We have made significant progress in establishing flow of traffic, the transportation of goods and services, and freedom of movement for surrounding residents.
- Though there have not been any arrests made, there needs to be consequences for those who have broken the law. Rest assured, we are taking actions.
- There are a number of investigations underway under the Criminal Code, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act, the Traffic Safety Act and Use of Highway and Rules of the Road Regulations and charges will be laid. Tickets have also been actioned for traffic safety violations and more which presented immediate public safety risks.

Why did RCMP arrest Personal Info. rather than protesters at the blockade?

- You would have to speak to Alberta RCMP HQ.

Why haven't you been enforcing Bill C1?

- Our primary objectives have been public safety, to keep the border - a vital economic trade point for Albertans and Canadians - open for crossing; and to ensure citizens in the area affected have safe passage through the protest area, unimpeded emergency services, and free flow of goods and services to their communities.
- At the same time, we have a number of investigations underway under the Criminal Code, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act, the Traffic Safety Act and Use of Highway and Rules of the Road Regulations and charges will be laid.

There have been reports that protestors are armed? Can you confirm?

- We always approach situations like this with the understanding that there may be a presence of firearms or weapons.
- However, in this instance, there have not been any confirmed reports of firearms.

We are seeing blockades in Ontario. Do you think lack of consequences at the Coutts border has emboldened protestors?

- I can't speculate on what's occurring there.

Have you been working with the province during these events?

- This is not something that I am involved with. You would have to ask Alberta RCMP HQ.

Are you in control of the situation?

- Yes, we are in control.
- We have many resources focussed on resolving this situation.

How many resources do you have on the ground?

- I can't give you an exact number as that changes based on the need. Again, this is a very dynamic situation.
- We have adequate resources in place to address this issue.

Are you aware of the other protests / blockades popping up around the province?

- You would have to speak to Alberta RCMP HQ.

If pressed about Are we seeing confederate flags / swastika's like in Ottawa?

- None

What can you tell us about the second illegal protest at the check point on Highway 4 and Hwy 501?

- Southbound and Northbound lanes are open and its has generally remained peaceful.
- Our priority is to keep the roadways open and traffic flowing. We have established checkpoints in a way that we feel best accomplishes that goal.
- We continue to work to move this to a lawful protest.

Why aren't you towing?

- As you can understand, moving a large volume of oversized vehicles from the roadway is not an easy task. A number of options have been, and continue to be, considered as we work to bring this to a lawful event.
- If pressed about tow truck companies - You would have to speak to Alberta RCMP HQ about the latest status.

Why is the Alberta RCMP allowing fuel delivery to protesters?

- We began permitting fuel to be delivered to protestors. This decision was made for a variety of reasons, such as wanting to keep the vehicles in operating condition so that they remain mobile.

How much is this situation costing?

- As this is dynamic situation, it is difficult to give an estimation of the costs on a daily basis.
- Having said that, we track all costs related to events such as this closely. We'll be able to report on this at a later date.

Deputy Commissioner Zablocki mentioned concerns around police safety when it comes to enforcement. What makes you think things would result in violence if you began enforcement?

- Our top priority is always public and officer safety.
- Having large, powerful equipment intermingling with pedestrians and passenger cars poses a lot of risk already, even more so if police were to begin enforcement.
- With any situation like this, when tensions and emotions are running high, we have to go in prepared for any possible outcome or response.

Deputy Commissioner Zablocki said that the RCMP have made significant progress in policing the blockade. How so?

- Initially there were 250 trucks on site, we are now down to 50 trucks.

- We had made significant progress in establishing flow of traffic, the transportation of goods and services, and freedom of movement for surrounding residents. Protestors have since blocked the road again at the border crossing and we are working to get them to reopen it.

What is your recommendation for individuals encountering these protests or travelling through these blockades?

- The Alberta RCMP ask that motorists and pedestrians remain calm and obey all laws when encountering any type of protest. Confronting people and committing unsafe acts only serve to further inflame the situation. Individuals are asked to drive slowly, with increased caution and patience.

How did the cattle truck drivers manage to get across the border (2022-02-09)?

- There was an arrangement between the truck drivers and the protestors to allow those trucks across.

If people are protesting peacefully, why is enforcement action being taken?

- The Alberta RCMP respects the public's right to peaceful protest.
- This has been an unlawful protest from the beginning.
- When a protest is unlawful, police are obligated to take enforcement action to maintain public safety.
- While current protests remain peaceful, they are impeding public traffic and therefore deemed unlawful.
- We have taken, and continue to take, many steps to move this protest from an unlawful protest to a lawful protest.
- Now that there is a safe, lawful location for people to protest, there is no reason for them to remain on a public roadway, causing safety issues.

What will enforcement look like? What penalties will people face? Will there be criminal charges?

- There are a number of investigations underway under the Criminal Code, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act, the Traffic Safety Act and Use of Highway and Rules of the Road Regulations and charges will be laid.
- Enforcement may include charges and arrests for traffic violations.
- Throughout this protest our officers have been working to maintain public order and uphold the law. Since XXX, officers in the area issued XX traffic violation tickets and X 24-hour impaired driving suspensions.

Under what authority are you allowed to seize these vehicles or arrest these people?

- These individuals obstructed a highway and prevented vehicles from accessing an international border and important trade corridor.
- Under Section 2 of the *Critical Infrastructure Defence Act*, we are given powers of arrest and we can seize these vehicles as evidence. [Note: we will not be utilizing the Proceeds of Crime legislation for the seizure of these vehicles]

Media Lines

Lines for speaking to media about people leaving/enforcement:

General:

- Throughout this protest, the Alberta RCMP has acted to preserve the peace, maintain public safety and ensure the flow of traffic at the Coutts border crossing.
- We are grateful to the public for their patience and cooperation as we have worked to maintain order during this past week's events. Thank you.

Enforcement:

- Throughout this protest, the Alberta RCMP has acted to preserve the peace, maintain public safety and ensure the flow of traffic at the Coutts border crossing.
- Up to this point, individuals at the Coutts border crossing have generally been cooperative with law enforcement while exercising their right to peacefully protest.
- However, as the last of protesters have failed to disband and they continue to impede traffic, the Alberta RCMP is turning to enforcement in order to ensure the border crossing is cleared and can resume to normal traffic flow.
- In situations such as this, Alberta RCMP's first resort is always open lines of communication to peacefully resolve any disputes. If there is a reasonable chance of achieving a resolution through dialogue, that is preferable to enforcement.
- Our goal for any protest or demonstration is to utilize a measured approach. Extensive efforts are being taken to engage with the remaining protesters in the hopes that resolution can be reached.